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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SAJ-01 SY-05 /064 W
----------211828Z 130872 /54-53
P R 211330Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIROITY 1917
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0211

C O R R E C T E D COPY FOR EO TAGS AND SUBJECT LINE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SOPN, PFOR, CZ
SUBJECT: PROTEST TO MFA RE HARASSMENT OF POST CORRESPONDENT GETLER

1. DURING HIS VISIT HERE THIS WEEK, WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT MICHAEL GETLER HAS REPEATEDLY INFORMED EMBASSY OF HEAVY SURVEILLANCE--
TO THE POINT OF HARRASSMENT--THAT HE HAS EXPERIENCED. GETLER SHOWED DCM A TELEGRAM HE HAD RECEIVED JANUARY 19 INDICATING HE HAD REPORTED THIS SURVEILLANCE TO THE WASHINGTON POST HOME OFFICE, WHICH HAD PROTESTED TO CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY DCM BUZEK AND HAD
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BROUGHT THE MATTER TO ATTENTION OF THE DEPARTMENT.

2. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THE AMBASSADOR, GETLER INDICATED HE HAD TRIED TO INTERVIEW DEPUTY FONMIN SPACIL, BUT WAS UNABLE TO GET AN APPOINTMENT. HE HAD ALSO TRIED IN VAIN TO SEE MFA PRESS DIRECTOR KADNAR. HE FINALLY OBTAINED AN APPOINTMENT WITH KADNAR'S DEPUTY, SMID, BUT BY THIS TIME GETLER HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO SO MUCH

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HARASSMENT THAT HE MAINLY UTILIZED THE MEETING TO LODGE HIS OWN PROTEST. SMID FEIGNED IGNORANCE OF ANY SURVEILLANCE AGAINST GETLER, BUT INDICATED HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

3. WHEN HEAVY SURVEILLANCE CONTINUED, GETLER VISITED SMID A SECOND TIME, WITH THE SAME DIALOGUE REPEATED. SMID TOLD GETLER THE WASHINGTON POST'S "ANTI-VIETNAM POLICY" ASSURED ITS STAFF A WELCOME HERE. GETLER REPLIED THAT HE WAS A REPORTER, NOT AN EDITORIAL WRITER AND ONLY WANTED TO GET HIS HANDS ON REPORTING ASSIGNMENTS, WHICH INCLUDED AMONG OTHER ISSUEES FOLLOWING UP ON CHARTER 77 AND SPEAKING WITH THOSE INVOLVED. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD RECEIVED HIS VISA FROM GOC WELL BEFORE THE CHARTER 77 STORY BROKE,BUT AT PRESENT THIS STORY IS OF OBVIOUS NEWS INTEREST. GETLER ALSO NOTED FOR THE RECORD THAT THE POST WAS NOT ALWAYS CRITICAL OF US POLICY IN VIETNAM.

4. IN REVIEWING THESE DEVELOPMENTS WITH THE AMBASSADOR, GETLER SAID HE HAD COME TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITH AN ENTIRELY OPEN MIND. HE WISHED TO RAMAIN FULLY OBJECTIVE IN HIS EVALUATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK DEVELOPMENTS, BUT THE HARASSMENT AGAINST HIM TESTED HIS PATIENCE TO SAY THE LEAST. HE INDICATED HE INTENDED TO WRITE ABOUT THE TREATMENT ACCORDED HIM IN PRAGUE.

5. WE DECIDED TO ASK FOR APPOINT WITH MFA SIXTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR TO LODGE EMBASSY PROTEST AT POLITICAL LEVEL CONCERNING THIS UNACCEPTABLE TREATMENT OF A VISITING US JOURNALIST. WHEN MFA TOLD US BOTH DIRECTOR ZANTOVSKY AND HIS DEPUTY NOVOTNY WERE ILL AND UNAVAILABLE, DCM ASKED TO SEE THE ACTING DIRECTOR.

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6. ON JANUARY 20, ACTING DIRECTOR JIRI JANCIK RECEIVED DCM, WHO EMPHASIZED EMBASSY'S CONCERN OVER THE EXTRAORDINARY SURVEILLANCE AND HARASSMENT OF GETLER THROUGHOUT HIS VISIT TO PRAGUE SINCE JANUARY 17. DCM SAID EMBASSY IS PERSUADED THAT GETLER IS SIMPLY TRYING TO DO HIS JOB AS A REPORTER, BUT HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION FOR MAKING CONTACTS--EVEN WITH OTHER WESTERN JOURNALISTS, SPECIFICALLY AT THE LOCAL REUTERS OFFICE. SUCH HEAVY-HANDED ACTIVITIES CAN ONLY HINDER EFFORTS TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND THEY VIOLATE PRECEPTS OF CSCE PROVISIONS FOR IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS.

7. NOTABLY, JANCIK DID NOT DENY KNOWLEDGE OF SURVEILLANCE, INSTEAD, HE TOOK THE POSITION THAT CZECHOSLOVAK HAS RECENTLY EXPERIENCED STEPPED-UP CRITICISM BY AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, HAS BELIEVED THAT THESE JOURNALISTS HAVE VIOLATED THE "SPIRIT OF HELSINKI -- WHICH IS TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING," AND HAS CONSEQUENTLY TAKEN STEPS TO INCREASE ITS VIGILANCE. HE THOUGHT SURVEILLANCE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WAS "NORMAL PRACTICE, EVEN IN THE UNITED STATES." DCM REJOINED THAT SUCH ACTIVITY WAS

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DEFINITELY NOT NORMAL IN US.

8. IN CONCLUDING THE DISCUSSION, JANCIK SAID HE WOULD BRING DCM'S REMARKS TO ATTENTION OF COMPETENT OFFICIALS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HARASSMENT, VISITS, JOURNALISTS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 21-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3535215
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROTEST TO MFA RE HARASSMENT OF POST CORRESPONDENT
TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, PINS, US, CZ, (GETLER, MICHAEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/99d5b7d2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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